Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

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Report on Implementation of Article X of the Convention

Submitted by India

1. India is firmly committed to fulfilling all of its obligations under the BWC and in particular, attaches high importance to the full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention. The promotional aspects related to cooperation and assistance are crucial elements in strengthening of the Convention and in achieving universal adherence. India has regularly shared its experiences in implementation of Article X in BWC meetings including during the Seventh Review Conference.

2. India supports the position of NAM and Other States Parties to the BWC that full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X is an integral and essential part of compliance with the Convention and supports the proposal on Article X submitted at the Seventh Review Conference.

3. India has developed significant capabilities in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes and places considerable emphasis on broadest possible international cooperation in this field, in particular with developing countries. This is consistent with Article X which embodies an international commitment to partnership, assistance, sharing of information, exchanges and the development of mutually beneficial outcomes. The following provides an overview of India's engagement – both bilateral and multilateral, of relevance to the implementation of Article X.

4. India has extensive cooperation in the health sector and medicine with a large number of countries. In the period since 2012, MOUs/agreements or other arrangements for cooperation in this sector were entered into with: Bangladesh, Bhutan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yemen, Indonesia, Maldives, Netherlands, Kuwait, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Madagascar, Uganda, Kenya and Lesotho.

5. India has cooperative programmes with the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Canada for development of technologies for disease surveillance, diagnosis and control. In the field of biotechnology, India also has cooperative programmes with Finland, Germany, Sweden, Brazil and Viet

Nam. Joint Partnership programmes in the fields of health, food and nutrition security are underway with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

6. India has supported the role of the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health and implements various regulations including the WHO's 2005 International Health Regulations. India supports enhancing effective cooperation and coordination between relevant international and regional organizations for use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. India has been regularly reporting on outbreaks of infectious diseases, not only those that are mandatory to notify but also all the other re-emerging and newly emerging diseases. As and when required, India has sought cooperation from foreign partners for advanced technologies for surveillance, detection, and diagnosis of highly infectious and pathogenic agents which can cause diseases in humans and animals.

7. India has produced and supplied diagnostic kits for some emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as Japanese Encephalitis, Dengue and Chikungunya to other developing countries through the WHO SEARO. The diagnostic kits developed by India are cost-effective as compared to other available products and therefore better suited for needs of developing countries. India has also provided through the WHO and bilaterally (Timor-Leste Myanmar, Nepal) reagents helpful for diagnosis of a number of diseases including H1N1, H5N, MERS CoV etc. India has provided technical expertise in recent years to countries such as Nepal, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand. In training courses organized in India, participants from the following countries participated: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste. India has also conducted a workshop on biosafety and biosecurity for participants from Nepal and Bangladesh.

8. In the field of plant health and protection, a number of training programmes were organized in India, both bilaterally or through regional bodies such as SAARC, which had participants from a number of countries including: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. Similarly, in the field of animal Health, India has cooperated with a number of countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

9. In September 2013, India hosted the 31st WHO SEARO Health Ministers meeting which focussed on a number of issues including a Regional Action Plan for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, Pandemic Influenza Preparedness etc. In January 2013, the 2nd BRICS Health Ministers meeting adopted the Delhi Communiqué for increased cooperation amongst BRICS countries in the field of health.

10. At the SAARC Summit in Kathmandu on 26 November 2014, India's Prime Minister announced India's support for SAARC in meeting the short fall in funds for establishing the SAARC Regional Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV, vaccines for children, monitoring and surveillance of polio free countries and provide vaccines where Polio might reappear and immediate visas for those seeking medical treatment in India

11. India announced a contribution of more than US $ 12 million to the Ebola Response Multi Partner Trust Fund, the WHO and the purchase of protective gear for addressing the recent Ebola Disease outbreak. In August 2014, India had provided immediate bilateral financial assistance for purchase of medical supplies to three of the affected countries – Sierra Leone, Liberia and Republic of Guinea. Diagnostic support was provided to Sri Lanka through WHO-SEARO for diagnosis of suspected Ebola.

12. India has a well-established pharmaceutical industry and is a major exporter of high quality and affordable pharmaceutical drugs and vaccines. A case in point are generic drugs

which have resulted in dramatic reduction in cost of treatment, for instance of HIV/AIDS. India has emphasized the importance of access to affordable, quality, safe medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to all, in particular those in developing countries through appropriate policies and regulations.

13. While international exchanges are an important pillar for implementation of Article X, and considerable progress has taken place in recent years, there exist gaps in access to and availability of advanced technologies for application in peaceful uses, for example, in obtaining equipment or materials, training opportunities, obtaining clinical samples or access to affordable medicines and vaccines and complex visa procedures for scientists which hinders timely and regular collaboration in areas of common interest to the scientific community. There is need for efforts in the context of the BWC to identify and overcome obstacles in implementation of Article X to generate equitable benefits for States Parties, in particular developing countries.

14. The implementation of Article X should facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and technology related to the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. Strengthened implementation of Article III would ensure that the cooperation envisaged under Article X is not abused. Thus effective national export controls are important tools to prevent the misuse of biological agents and toxins for purposes prohibited by the Convention or falling into the hands of terrorists. India is committed to maintaining effective export controls on par with the highest international standards with respect to transfers of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes.

15. India supports the introduction of the standing agenda item for the 2012-2015 inter-sessional programme on Cooperation and Assistance with particular focus on implementation of Article X and has actively contributed to discussions on this agenda item.